DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 581 CS 003 809

AUTHOR Swindling, James A.
TITLE Attitudes of Community College Instructors toward Reading: A Process for Change.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western College Reading Association (10th, Denver, Colorado, March 31-April 2, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Colleges; *Content Reading; Junior Colleges; *Reading Instruction; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Responsibility; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes of 79 community college instructors toward reading instruction in the content areas. The instructors responded to a 14-item attitude inventory modified from a similar study of secondary-school teachers. The study concludes that instructors' lack of confidence is partly responsible for their reluctance to teach reading; teachers' feelings of inadequacy, rather than their refusal to accept responsiblity for reading instruction, are emphasized. When compared to teachers at the secondary level, however, community college instructors showed less tolerance than did junior and senior high school teachers toward the under-achiever in reading and exhibited less sense of responsibility for reading instruction. (Author/RL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED146582

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James A. Swindling

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

ATTITUDES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS TOWARD READING: A PROCESS FOR CHANGE

James A. Swindling
Eastfield College

The ability to read has long been acknowledged as fundamental to the process of education, and as an essential tool for existence in society. Overall success in life in many instances has been directly equated with a person's level of educational achievement, or more simply, his ability to read printed material. Seemingly, it would go without saying that the teaching of reading should be the ultimate priority of education. Yet 21 million adults in America suffer from the inability to read even the most basic of materials and we are all well aware of the millions of high school graduates who cannot even read their own diploma (2,7). The seriousness of the problem is even recognized by the federal government (10).

If then, reading is the common objective of employers, educators, and the federal government collectively, where can blame for failure to meet this goal legitimately be placed? Many have suggested the fault lay primarily with secondary and higher education instructors who neglected to assume responsibility for the teaching of reading in the content areas (2,3,4,5,6,11,12,13,14).

Since the community college is the next step upward in the

CS003809

educational ladder after the secondary school; perhaps an attempt should be made to determine their part in this problem. The unique function of the community college and its student centeredness is widely accepted and is quite different from that of the traditional four-year institution. Community colleges attract, because of their location and open door admission policies, students who are not typical college material and are therefore deficient in basic skill areas (1,9,15). Determining the extent to which community college instructors are adapting teaching styles to fit the needs of their students in reading and the attitudes they hold towards these changes may give insight into the perplexing problem of how to teach reading to students more effectively.

Population Studied

This study was conducted in an attempt to obtain a total faculty attitude which would adequately represent the feeling of Eastfield Community College instructors toward that all encompassing idea of "reading." The sample group consisted of 79 instructors of Eastfield College. The disciplines and number responding in each area included: Humanities, 13; Social Science, 12; Science, 7; Business, 11; Math/Engineering, 17; Communications, 13; and Physical Education, 6.

Instrument Used

The attitude inventory used in the study was designed by Otto and Smith (11). It was adapted for our purpose by rewording items containing references to junior and senior high schools and changing them to read community college.

Insert Table 1

Table 1

Questions on the Attitude Inventory

1. In the community college the teaching of reading should be the responsibility of reading instructors only.
2. Community college instructors can teach reading effectively without special university courses in methods of teaching reading.
3. The teaching of reading skills can be incorporated into academic area courses without interfering with the major objectives of those courses.
4. Any community college instructor who assigns reading should teach his or her students how to read what is assigned.
5. With rare exceptions, students should know what there is to know about reading before they are permitted to leave the public schools.
6. Only remedial reading should be necessary in the community college and that should be done by remedial reading teachers in special classes.
7. Teaching reading is a technical process that community college instructors generally know nothing about.
8. Community college instructors cannot teach reading without special material designed for that purpose.
9. Teaching reading is a necessary and legitimate part of teaching any academic course in the community college.
10. Teaching reading takes all the fun out of teaching at the community college level.
11. Every community college instructor should be a teacher of reading.
12. At the community college level students want to learn content, not how to read.
13. Integrating the teaching of reading with the teaching of specific content can be as exciting for the academic area instructor as teaching content only.
14. Academic area instructors in the community college are probably more competent to teach the reading skills needed for their courses than special reading instructors.

The questionnaire consisted of fourteen items, arranged in a Likert type model with seven items 2,3,4,9,11,13, and 14 being positive questions and items 1,5,6,7,8,10, and 12 being negative. A value of one to five was assigned to the negative items ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," and a five to one value given the positive items. Thus it was possible to obtain a total score on each questionnaire with a high score indicating a more positive attitude. The total range possible was from 14 to 70.

The attitude inventory provided items that would determine each instructor's concept of: 1) his personal role in the teaching of reading in his academic area; 2) his personal preparation and ability to teach reading skills; 3) the degree of enjoyment he experienced while teaching reading skills; and 4) his view of the role of the reading specialist at the community college level.

Treatment of Data

The data obtained from the questionnaire was treated by tabulating the score of each individual questionnaire according to the Likert model. The results were divided by academic areas and a simple one way analysis of variance was run to determine significance of the scores. Results indicated there were not significant differences between groups in attitudes toward reading.

Insert Table 2

The number of responses to each of the five possible choices was compiled and the percentage determined for each discipline.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Attitudes of Various Divisional Staff Members Regarding the Teaching of Reading

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Sum of Squares	F
Between	518.83	6	86.47	1.139
Within	5,467.34	72	75.94	
Total	5,986.17	78		

A total score was computed indicating the number and percentages of the entire group's response to the questionnaire.

Insert Table 3

Analysis of Responses by Academic Areas

The responses of the Humanities Division revealed they felt little responsibility in the area of reading. They expressed strong disagreement to Item 11 stating every teacher is a teacher of reading; and to Item 4 which dealt with responsibility of instructors to teach students to read assigned material. Items 7 and 14 involved competency of instructors in the technical process of transmitting skills. Responses indicated a lack of confidence to both questions.

Members of the Social Science Division felt courses and materials were needed if they were to teach reading skills, Items 2 and 8. They also felt students should learn to read in elementary schools with a total of 100% either in agreement or strongly agreeing with that statement. Similarly, instructors in Math and Engineering agreed with Item 5 placing responsibility with elementary teachers or with reading specialists at the college level, Item 6.

The area of Communications, which includes English and related subjects was for the most part most favorable toward reading. They disagreed with Item 2 stating instructors could teach without special courses and with Item 6 which held that reading was the responsibility of specialists only. Strong agreement was expressed to Item 9 describing reading as a necessary and legitimate part of academic area courses. Strong dis-

Table 3

Response of Total Faculty Toward Fourteen Statements Regarding the Teaching of Reading

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	21	27	30	38	4	5	20	25	4	5
2	1	1	11	14	6	8	43	54	18	23
3	2	3	26	33	2	3	35	44	14	18
4	2	3	17	22	3	4	33	42	24	30
5	26	33	32	41	4	5	15	19	2	3
6	19	24	25	32	5	6	28	35	2	3
7	12	15	35	44	7	9	23	29	2	3
8	10	13	23	29	11	14	30	38	5	6
9	7	9	25	32	12	15	23	29	12	15
10	6	8	10	13	17	22	38	48	8	10
11	2	3	18	23	3	4	33	42	23	29
12	10	13	27	34	11	14	28	35	3	4
13	3	4	26	33	9	11	31	39	10	13
14	3	4	5	6	7	9	35	44	29	37

agreement to Item 10 indicated they felt reading instruction would not take the fun out of teaching. In general a willingness to accept reading as a legitimate task was shown by Communications instructors.

The Physical Education Division felt reading was a necessary part of courses, Item 9; but disagreed that every teacher was a teacher of reading, Item 11. Fifty percent agreed to Item 1 which stated reading was the responsibility of reading specialists only.

Business instructors almost entirely strongly disagreed with Items 3, 4, 5, 11, and 14 indicating that they felt reading instruction was not their responsibility.

Questions 7, 8, and 14 regarding ability and training of instructors indicated the Science faculty felt they lacked sufficient training in these skills. Eighty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed with Item 1 placing responsibility for instruction with specialists. Item 5 elicited a combined total of 70% agreement that reading should be learned in the elementary school.

Analysis of Attitude of Total Eastfield Faculty

Analysis of total staff responses to the inventory indicate a strong negative attitude to the idea of reading. Responsibility for instruction was again relegated to the elementary and secondary school with 33% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing with Item 5. Also, 42% disagreed, and 29% strongly disagreed that every instructor should be a teacher of reading which was the key question in the survey. This strong response to Item 11 clearly negated a feeling of obligation for reading instruction by the Eastfield faculty.

Items designed to assess the degree of confidence also revealed negative trends. Item 2 obtained a 77% response either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that reading could be taught without Methods courses. Forty-four percent agreed that reading was a technical process which most instructors know nothing about. Academic area instructors felt reading specialists were more capable in teaching reading skills than they themselves, as evidenced by a 44% disagreement to Item 7.

The only positive note which seemed at variance with other responses was Item 10. Forty-eight percent of the instructors disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed that teaching reading would take the fun out of teaching. Perhaps it can be hypothesized that an overall lack of conficence in preparation and competency influenced responses to responsibility.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings in this study did not show that significant differences occurred in attitudes of various divisional staff regarding the teaching of reading. Any differences which occurred between disciplines could be attributed to chance.

In regard to the four areas examined by the attitude inventory, it can be generalized that: 1) Eastfield Community College instructors did not feel a sense of responsibility toward the teaching of reading; 2) Instructors felt a lack of confidence in ability and desired more training and material related to reading; 3) The actual task of teaching reading skills would not take the fun out of teaching, and; 4) The staff did view the reading specialist as an important part of the instructional process.

It can be concluded that a lack of confidence is at least in

part responsible for the reluctance of instructors to teach reading. Support for this statement is indicated by agreement of instructors that such instruction would not make teaching less enjoyable. This indicated a feeling of inadequacy on their part rather than refusal to accept responsibility for the task.

Results of the study, when compared to a similar study, conducted by Otto and Smith (11) indicated that community college instructors are less tolerant than junior and senior high school teachers toward the under-achiever in reading. In Otto and Smith's study 70% of junior high school teachers answered "yes" to Item 11 stating that every teacher should be a teacher of reading as compared to 48% in high school and only 26% in this study. Thus, it can be concluded that community college instructors feel even less of a sense of responsibility toward reading.

After observation of data, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made. A similar study should be attempted not only to identify attitudes of instructors but to assess the quality of reading instruction now being offered in the academic areas. Also, limitations of the study could be overcome by repetition at other community colleges to see if significant differences exist between campuses. This would increase application of findings and perhaps more concrete conclusions could be formulated.

REFERENCES

1. Abrenat, Kenneth M. and Shirley S. Harelton. "Informal Skills Assessment for Individualized Instruction," Journal of Reading, 1973, 17, 52-57.

2. Bossone, Richard M. "Every Secondary Teacher a Teacher of Reading," High School Journal, 1962, 46, 74-77.

3. Braam, Leonard S. and Marilyn A. Roehm. "Subject Area Teachers Familiarity with Reading Skills," Journal of Developmental Reading, 1963, 7, 188-196.

4. Buder, Louis A. "Preparing Future Secondary Teachers in Reading," Journal of Reading, 1972, 15, 492-494.

5. Duke, Charles and Anne Powers. "Reading in the Content Area," The Clearing House, 1973, 48, 221-226.

6. Dulin, Kenneth L. "Skill Training for all Secondary Teachers," Journal of Reading, 1971, 15, 109-113.

7. Harris, Albert J. How to Increase Reading Ability. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1970.

8. Kline, Lloyd W. "An Overview as Strategy," Journal of Reading, 1974, 17, 590-591.

9. Miklas, Milton J. "An Analysis of Remedial Reading Programs in California Junior Colleges, Four Year Colleges and Universities," Doctoral Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles, 1954.

10. Mueller, D. L. "Teacher Attitudes Toward Reading," Journal of Reading, 1973, 17, 202-205.

11. Otto, Wayne and Richard J. Smith. "Junior and Senior High School Teachers' Attitudes Toward Teaching Reading in the Content Area," The Psychology of Reading Behavior. Milwaukee: National Reading Conference, Inc., 1968.

12. Payne, Gary L. "Reading Evaluation by the High School Teacher - A Response," Journal of REading, 1972, 16, 221-226.

13. Rosewall, Paul T. "We All Teach Reading," The Clearing House, 1973, 48, 213-216.

14. Spache, George D. Toward Better Reading. Champaign: Garrard Publishing Company, 1963.

15. Tyler, Ralph W. "The Teaching Obligation," The Junior College Journal, 1960, 30, 525-531.

ATTITUDES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS TOWARD READING: A PROCESS FOR CHANGE

The Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of community college instructors toward the teaching of reading in the academic areas. Seventy-nine instructors from seven divisions participated in the study at Eastfield College. They were asked to respond to an attitude inventory consisting of fourteen items. An attempt was made to identify feelings in relation to the instructors: perception of their role in the teaching of reading in their academic area; their personal preparation and ability to teach reading skills; degree of enjoyment experienced while teaching reading skills; and view of the role of the reading specialist at the community college level.

Findings

1. There was no significant difference between groups in attitudes toward reading. 2. Eastfield Community College instructors did not feel a sense of responsibility toward the teaching of reading. 3. Instructors felt a lack of confidence in their ability and desired more training and material related to reading. 4. The actual task of teaching reading skills would not take the fun out of teaching. 5. The faculty did view the reading specialist as an important part of the instructional process.

Conclusions

There was positive evidence that a lack of confidence is at least in part responsible for the reluctance of instructors to teach reading in the academic areas. This indicated a feeling of inadequacy on their part rather than refusal to accept responsibility for the task. However, community college instructors were less tolerant than junior and senior high school teachers toward the under-achiever in reading and feel even less of a sense of responsibility toward reading.